

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Conference organizes support  
for Sahrawi independence fight  
— PAGE 2

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 86/NO. 4 JANUARY 31, 2022

## Supporters of 'Militant' drive to boost its long term readership

BY SETH GALINSKY

Socialist Workers Party members and fellow supporters of the *Militant* are using the paper's international renewal drive to continue discussions with readers on perspectives to defend the rights and needs of the working class, exchange views on the big political and social questions we face, and win new volunteers to help expand the reach of the paper and the SWP.

Socialist Workers Party members Jeanne FitzMaurice and Rebecca Williamson visited subscriber Latifah Sidney in Tukwila, Washington, Jan. 15. Sidney, an office worker, said she appreciated "the visit and the real-life exchange."

Williamson told her about a strike by Teamsters Local 174 cement and dump truck drivers in King County and suggested they go together to bring solidarity. Sidney liked the idea.

When Sidney said she'd just ordered *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Williamson showed her *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes. Malcolm was a revolutionary leader of the working class, Barnes writes. He explains why the conquest of

Continued on page 3

## Back striking coal miners, Colorado grocery workers!



Militant/Susan LaMont

Warrior Met coal miners, on strike since last April 1, hear report from United Mine Workers President Cecil Roberts, standing at right, at weekly rally in Brookwood, Alabama, Jan. 12.

### 8,400 King Soopers strikers fight over wages, two-tiers

BY KAREN RAY  
AND VALERIE JOHNSON

ARVADA, Colo. — The strike by some 8,400 United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7 members against the giant Kroger's grocery chain King Soopers remains strong, with picket lines set up here and throughout the greater Denver area, from Boulder to Parker. Later this

Continued on page 5

### Warrior Met miners step up Alabama strike, win support

BY SUSAN LAMONT

BROOKWOOD, Ala. — "We've worked out with the court that the union can start picketing again," United Mine Workers of America District 20 Representative James Blankenship told the crowd of striking Warrior Met Coal miners at their weekly solidarity rally here Jan. 12.

The rally drew strikers, retired miners and family members to hear the latest developments in the long-running strike, which began when 1,100 UMW members walked out April 1. They also picked up their strike benefit checks.

"We're going to be back on the picket line, starting this upcoming week," Blankenship said. "We've got to take the bull by the horns and drive

Continued on page 6

## Deadly fires in Philadelphia, NY caused by landlord greed

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — Seventeen people perished, including eight children, all from smoke inhalation during a Jan. 9 fire in the 19-story Twin Parks Northeast building in the Bronx. The big-business media immediately laid the blame on a seemingly thoughtless tenant who had left a faulty space heater running.

It turned out the fire started in the third-floor apartment of Mamadou Wague, who, like many other tenants, was running space heaters because the landlords chronically fail to provide enough heat. All the building's hallway doors are supposed to close automatically, but when he rushed to get his family out, he didn't notice his didn't close.

Smoke poured out of the apartment, traveling up staircases that are supposed to take the place of fire escapes in the building, which has no sprinkler system. Some staircase doors also failed to close, like on the 15th floor, which became a death trap, as did the staircase.

Fire alarms were initially ignored, because they routinely went off when in fact there was no fire.

There is just one root cause of what became the worst fire here since 1990 — the greed of the capitalist landlords and banks who put maximizing profits ahead of the life and living conditions of those who reside in the buildings they own.

Twin Parks was earmarked as "affordable" housing, which meant its owners reap millions in low-interest loans and other government subsidies. This is a fast-growing "industry" for well-heeled landlords who seek the guaranteed and

Continued on page 4

## Capitalist rulers face political crisis: What's at stake for working people?



Teamsters Local 174

Concrete mixer drivers and plant workers at start of strike in early December in Washington state. Capitalist rulers are driving to offload crisis of their system onto workers' backs, while neither of the bosses' political parties is capable of providing a stable capitalist government.

BY TERRY EVANS

The ruling capitalist families face a deepening political crisis today. Neither of the parties they've relied on for decades can provide them with political stability. Both Democrats and Republicans are locked in relentless

battles for turf and control, and both are torn by internal dissent.

Neither have any solutions to reverse the stagnation that marks the world capitalist economy, nor prevent the bosses from pushing the effects of

Continued on page 7

## Washington and Moscow spar over military, political power in Ukraine

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Talks between the U.S.-led NATO military alliance and the Russian government over Moscow's troop buildup on its border with Ukraine ended in a deadlock Jan. 13. Washington, no friend of the Ukrainian people, is defending the economic and political interests of the U.S. capitalist rulers. They seek to contain Moscow's threats, while making sure they take no steps that would lead to a military confrontation.

The Russian rulers are pursuing their long-term goal of imposing their domination over Ukraine, as they act to do in Belarus, Kazakhstan and all of their "near abroad."

"The West has been driven by hubris and has exacerbated tensions,"

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told the press Jan. 14. U.S. officials say they're preparing sanctions to target pro-Russian separat-

Continued on page 6

### Inside

Editorial: Fight to end Jim  
Crow changed US forever 9

'Israel is, will remain a Jewish  
state,' says Palestinian leader 4

—On the picket line, p. 5—

Steelworkers picket to prepare  
for Marathon contract talks

San Diego sanitation workers  
win wage increase, end strike



# Conference organizes support for Sahrawi independence fight

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

MALAGA, Spain — “Youth organizations from all over the world have come here to support freedom and independence for the people of Western Sahara,” Hamdi Aomar Taubali told a gathering of over 150 young people from around the world. “You have come to reject and condemn colonialism, occupation and crimes against humanity.”

Taubali is officer of international relations at UJSARIO, the youth wing of the Polisario Front, which leads the struggle of the Sahrawi people for independence. He was addressing the International Youth Forum of Solidarity With Western Sahara that took place here Nov. 26 -28.

“The youth of Western Sahara are fed up with the United Nations’ betrayal of its promises to organize a referendum for self-determination, and its tolerance of Moroccan violations of Sahrawi people’s rights,” he said.

For decades the people of Western Sahara have fought against the occupation of their land. Their struggle forced the Spanish rulers to relinquish control over Western Sahara in 1975. But the Moroccan regime then seized two-thirds of the country and the government of Mauritania grabbed the rest.

Polisario fighters continued their struggle, and by 1979 they defeated Mauritania’s armed forces. As they pulled out, Moroccan troops moved in to occupy all of Western Sahara. Some 9,000 people were killed over 16 years of war and many Sahrawis were forced to flee to refugee camps in southwestern Algeria.

In 1991 both sides agreed to a U.N.-brokered cease-fire. The agreement called for holding a referendum where Sahrawis could choose independence.

But the Moroccan monarchy has blocked all attempts to hold a vote. The government in Rabat relocated some 350,000 Moroccans to Western Sahara and insisted they be included in any referendum. Because of this, and the forced flight of refugees, Moroccans now make up two-thirds of Western Sahara’s population.

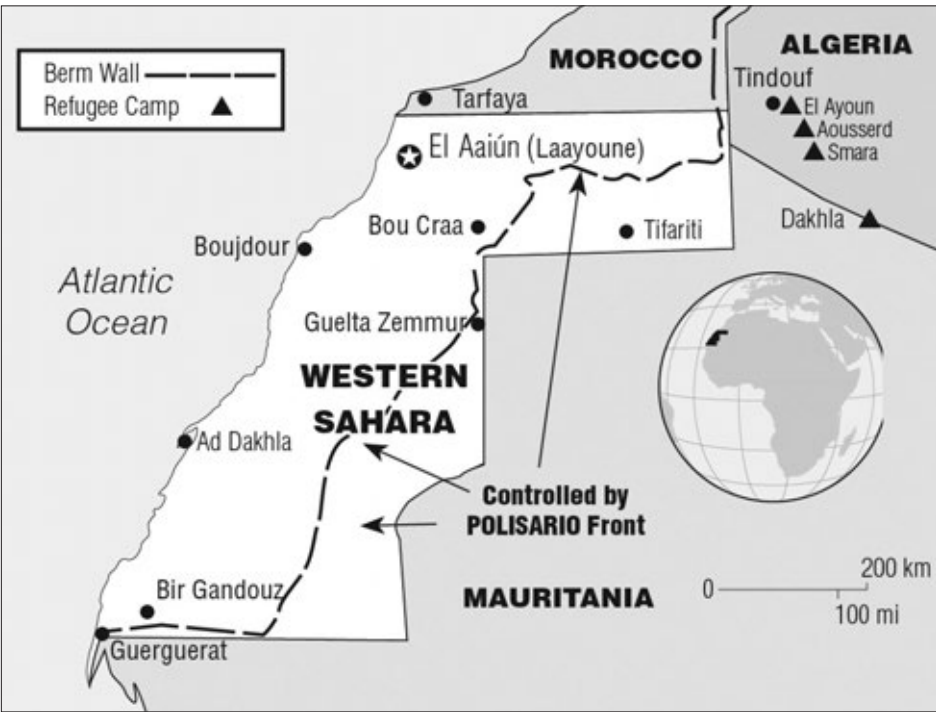
In November 2020 Moroccan armed forces entered a U.N.-patrolled demilitarized “buffer zone” in Guerguerat, in violation of the 1991 agreement. Their troops fired on Sahrawi protesters who were demanding a halt to the Moroccan government’s construction of a road through the buffer zone.

In response, the Polisario Front announced the Sahrawi People’s Liberation Army would resume attacks against Royal Moroccan Army forces occupying Western Sahara.

“For 29 years there was a tendency to deviate from the course of holding a referendum,” Oubi Bouchraya Bachir, Polisario representative to Europe and the European Union, told the conference, and “to consolidate Moroccan rule. When Morocco broke the cease-fire, we had to respond by exercising our legitimate right to self-defense.”

Bouchraya said the Polisario Front’s offensive has brought renewed international attention to the conditions faced by the people of Western Sahara.

This was reflected at the conference. It gathered representatives of



90 youth organizations from 53 countries. They hold a range of views, often sharply opposed, on other political questions. Many are members of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. Founded in 1945 by the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union, it opened up to broader participation in the 1990s. Others came from member organizations of the International Union of Socialist Youth, aligned with Social Democratic parties.

The UJSARIO is a member of both and has won support in recent decades through its participation in the World Festival of Youth and Students, which is sponsored by the World Federation of Democratic Youth.

The conference was hosted by UJSARIO together with the Spanish Youth Council and the European-Latin American Youth Center, both of which are organized by the Spanish government.

Delegates included opponents of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has brutally suppressed resistance to his regime. Also participating were representatives of Palestinian and Kurdish organizations.

## Morocco emboldened by US support

The U.S. rulers are the main military backers of the regime in Rabat, supplying billions of dollars in arms, including F-16 jets and Apache attack helicopters.

The Moroccan government has been emboldened by Washington’s recognition in 2020 of Rabat’s sovereignty

over Western Sahara, in exchange for the kingdom’s recognition of Israel.

In 2021 the U.S.-led “African Lion” military exercise, hosted annually by the Moroccan government, included for the first time staging maneuvers in Al Mahbes, an area in occupied Western Sahara.

At the solidarity forum, the Young Socialists in the U.K. condemned Washington’s and London’s backing of the Moroccan occupation. Despite the U.K. government’s stance that Western Sahara’s status is “undetermined,” London sent forces to participate in the military exercises.

A message to the conference from the Young Socialists in the U.S. “condemns the deal made last year between U.S. imperialism and Rabat to trade Washington’s recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara for the monarchy’s opening of diplomatic relations with Israel.” It noted that this in no way contradicted “our demand that governments throughout the Mideast and beyond recognize the right of Israel to exist — that question has been settled by history — and normalize relations.”

In the final conference declaration, participants pledged “unconditional support and solidarity to the legitimate struggle of the Sahrawi people for freedom, decolonization and independence,” and to make heard “voices of the people of Western Sahara in our respective organizations, countries and communities.”

## THE MILITANT

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Fidel Castro’s January 1959 Caravan of Freedom in Cuba mobilized workers, farmers.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant’s* views. These are expressed in editorials.



# Boost ‘Militant’ readership

**Continued from front page**  
power by the working class will open the door to the final battle to win Black freedom.

Sidney bought the book, renewed her subscription and got a copy of *Teamster Rebellion* by Farrell Dobbs.

FitzMaurice and Michelle Smith stopped by to talk to *Militant* reader Cedric Pleasant, a worker at UPS and member of the Teamsters. His wife had bought the subscription and said Pleasant would like it too. She was right.

“We’re glad you’re getting out the news that the local papers don’t, and you build solidarity for the working man,” Pleasant said. He renewed and asked to be informed of Militant Labor Forums, where key questions facing the working class are discussed and debated.

Supporters of the *Militant* in Albany, New York, dropped by to see subscriber Terry Thompson Jan. 17. The 60-year-old worker said he didn’t agree with articles he had read in the *Militant* explaining why workers need to form our own party, a labor party based on the unions.

Thompson, who is Black and works two jobs to make ends meet, told SWP member Ved Dookhun, “The Democratic Party has a lot of flaws, they only ask for votes around election time. But they do some good for working people, not like the Republicans who serve the rich.

“If Democrats were the majority they could get things done, they could pass Biden’s ‘Build Back America,’” he said. “I don’t think capitalism needs to be brought down; it needs to be made better.”

The *Militant* explains the root cause of the problems workers face *is* capitalism. Founded on the exploitation of our labor, it can’t be bent to serve our needs. Both Democrats and Republicans defend and support capitalist rule.

In the coming weeks the paper will report on campaigns launched by the Socialist Workers Party for offices

across the country. The party’s candidates will point to the capacities of working people to fight for protection from unemployment and rising prices, and to build a party to lead millions to replace capitalist rule with a workers and farmers government.

In contrast, Build Back Better is aimed at lining the pockets of big capitalist companies whose interests the government defends. Dookhun didn’t convince Thompson. But Thompson told him he would “support what aligns with my interests, which is why I am interested in you. Because you talk about unions.”

Thompson wants to learn more about the Cuban Revolution. “I know about the Cuban missile crisis from the American side but I always wanted to know what happened from the Cuban side,” he said. He renewed his subscription and bought two books by leaders of Cuba’s socialist revolution, *To Speak the Truth* by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, and *October 1962: The ‘Missile’ Crisis as Seen From Cuba* by Tomás Diez Acosta.

### ‘Bosses see us as machines’

“Workers all over the world are being exploited and in many places are fighting against the conditions they face,” poultry factory worker Oladele Agbejule told Communist League members John Steele and Katy LeRougetel when they visited him at his apartment in Sainte-Claire, Quebec, Jan. 16. “For the bosses we’re just like the machines. They don’t see us as human beings.”

Agbejule was recently injured on



Militant/Bev Bernardo

John Steele, left, visits with poultry worker Oladele Agbejule Jan. 16 in Sainte-Claire, Quebec.

the job and is on light duty, but the bosses keep trying to get him to do heavier work, against recommendations of his doctor.

That’s why working people need to keep fighting and strengthening our unions, Steele said. “At the same time we need to organize our own political party and forge a Marxist leadership.” Pointing to the leadership forged during the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the 1959 Cuban Revolution, Steele said, “That’s the type of party the Communist League is trying to build.”

Agbejule bought *Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions* with articles by Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Farrell Dobbs and Jack Barnes.

Supporters of the *Militant* continue to reach out to win new readers. LeRougetel and Philippe Tessier knocked on the door of Carol Jalbert, a 75-year-old health care giver.

In the 1960s, the company where she

worked tried to stop women workers from wearing pants. After talking about this, Jalbert said, “We all went to work with pants for a week. After that we wore what we wanted.”

They also discussed government moves to impose a quarantine on non-vaccinated Canadian truck drivers. “Truckers should get vaccinated,” Jalbert said. “But truckers should stick together against the repressive measures of the government.” She subscribed and bought two books by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes, *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party* and *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People*.

Want to help introduce friends, co-workers, neighbors and relatives to the *Militant* and the Socialist Workers Party? See page 8 to contact the party branch nearest you, or contact the *Militant* at themilitant@mac.com.

## Volunteers find more interest in books by revolutionaries

BY JIM ALTENBERG

Volunteers working to get Pathfinder books into libraries and bookstores across North America are reporting increased interest in the wide range of revolutionary literature the publisher produces, including books by revolutionary leaders like Fidel Castro, Thomas Sankara, leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes.

As the bosses and their government press to load the burden of today’s crisis of their capitalist system onto the backs of working people, sales of a wide range of Pathfinder titles, which point a way for workers and farmers to organize and combat the crisis, are also expanding.

The fall 2021 sales effort by Pathfinder volunteers was begun last September with an ambitious goal of winning 100 new orders from bookstores, libraries, and for use as textbooks in school courses. As of the end of December, 91 orders have been placed, with a month to go.

As workers took strike action against John Deere, Kellogg’s, Warrior Met Coal, and numerous other companies, volunteers launched a concerted effort to introduce Pathfinder’s extensive list of titles on the trade unions to bookstore buyers and librarians. A special two-page flyer was sent out listing many of these titles, including Farrell Dobbs’ four-volume series on the rise of the Teamsters union and labor movement in the 1930s in the Upper Midwest, which the SWP leader helped to advance. These books, as well as *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Barnes; *In Defense of the US Working Class* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters; and *Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions* by Dobbs,

Barnes, Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, and V.I. Lenin, have generated orders.

Pathfinder books are important contributions to the intense debate over other key political questions as well. In Atlanta, several Pathfinder titles on the fight for women’s emancipation, including *Abortion Is a Woman’s Right!* the Education for Socialists series *Communist Continuity and the Fight for Women’s Liberation*, and *Women’s Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle* by Sankara, the leader of the 1983-87 revolution in Burkina Faso, were ordered by three libraries.

A bookstore in Virginia picked up *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*. Both English and Spanish editions of this book were ordered by a librarian in Oakland, California. Two bookstores in Montreal ordered the French edition.

Black History Month in February provides sales volunteers with a big opportunity to introduce Pathfinder books as an essential part of the discussion around the roots of racist oppression and capitalist exploitation and the class-struggle road to combat it.

Many new bookstores have opened in North America since the pandemic began. As libraries closed, volunteers have been able to get more orders from bookstores than they’ve done in years. Twenty-nine of the orders received were from stores ordering Pathfinder titles for the first time. And Pathfinder is now working with one of the large U.S. bookstore chains, whose stores have begun to carry titles by Malcolm X, Sankara, and Marx and Engels.

The African Studies Association and Middle East Studies Association conferences, held online in November, were an important opportunity to meet profes-

sors and introduce them to Pathfinder.

Many expressed appreciation at our suggestions of Pathfinder books that related to the topics presented. “Thank you so much for the suggestions, very valuable. I will take the opportunity to explore the books that you mentioned,” a professor from Spain at the Middle East Studies conference wrote. Efforts to get back to all these people in the next couple of weeks are already paying off, with a number of orders and interest in further discussion.

In October, the trial of Blaise Compaore and 13 others accused in the 1987 assassination of Sankara began. This has led to heightened interest in Sankara’s revolutionary ideas. Pathfinder volunteers introduced bookstore buyers to three books of his speeches published by Pathfinder. “I’d like to personally thank you for everything you and Pathfinder are doing to expand the light and make accessible the words and ideas of Thomas Sankara. I will send a note to the library staff about ordering these books,” a professor in Boston who attended the African Studies Association told Pathfinder volunteer Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir.

A bookstore in Los Angeles ordered 30 copies of *Thomas Sankara Speaks* along with 30 each of two other titles, and similar orders came from libraries in Vancouver, British Columbia; New York; and a large chain bookstore in Atlanta. Pathfinder publishes the three books of Sankara’s speeches in English, French, Spanish and Farsi.

Volunteers are now making plans to introduce Pathfinder’s latest title — *Labor, Nature, and the Evolution of Humanity*, by Frederick Engels, Karl Marx, George Novack and Mary-Alice Waters — when it’s released this month.

‘Militant’ Renewal Drive		
Jan. 1 - Feb. 15, week 2		
Country	Quota	Sold
UNITED STATES		
Albany	16	10
Atlanta	16	7
Chicago	25	14
Cincinnati	10	7
Dallas-Fort Worth*	15	9
Lincoln*	4	3
Los Angeles	17	5
Miami	7	4
Minneapolis	12	12
N. New Jersey	16	8
New York	25	8
Oakland	18	13
Philadelphia	10	7
Pittsburgh	12	6
Seattle	13	3
Washington, DC	11	7
Total U.S.	227	123
Prisoners*	20	13
UNITED KINGDOM		
London	10	5
Manchester	8	3
Total U.K.	18	8
Canada	30	14
New Zealand	5	3
Australia	10	4
Total	310	165
SHOULD BE	300	100
*Raised Goal		



# ‘Israel is, will remain a Jewish state,’ says Palestinian leader

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

“Israel was born as a Jewish state. And that was the decision of the Jewish people,” Mansour Abbas, a leader of Ra’am — the United Arab List party — and member of Israel’s Knesset, told the press Dec. 21. “It was born that way and that is how it will remain.”

His remarks ignited a wide discussion and debate in Israel and the Middle East. This is the first time a Palestinian official inside or outside Israel has recognized Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state.

“The question is not about the state’s identity, but what the status of Arab citizens will be in it,” Abbas added, during an interview held in Hebrew. He made similar statements in Arabic the month before, which were printed in the Nazareth-based *Kul al-Arab*.

“We [Arabs] have to decide whether we want to engage in campaigns that have a chance of succeeding — and then we’ll be able to develop as a society and prosper, and be an influential sector of society — or whether we want to be in an isolationist position and continue to talk about all these things for another 100 years,” Abbas said.

Ra’am was formed in 1996 by a coalition of the southern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel and several Bedouin parties, winning seats to the Knesset in every election since. In the 2020 elections it was part of the Joint List, an electoral coalition with three other predominantly Arab parties, which won 18 seats. In the 2021 elections Ra’am split from the Joint List, winning four seats itself.

Ra’am campaigned on solving issues facing Arab citizens of Israel — who make up 20% of the country’s population — to improve their quality of life, including a severe housing shortage and lack of schools.

Then in a move that shocked his former allies, Ra’am agreed to become part of the new governing coalition, joining seven other bourgeois parties in electing Naftali Bennett as prime minister. This is the first time in 50 years that an Arab party in Israel has been part of the ruling coalition.

After Ra’am joined the government, a leader of Balad, one of the parties in the Joint List, said Abbas was now an “outcast.” Despite the attacks by

“left” groups in Israel’s Arab community and by supporters of Hamas, the Islamist leader’s course is popular among many Palestinians.

## A new generation

“There’s a young generation here,” said Mohammad Magadli, a journalist for Israel’s Channel 12, that “isn’t willing to be second-class citizens. But it’s also a generation that wants to integrate into society, so they vote for Mansour Abbas.”

The statements by Abbas urging acceptance of Israel as a Jewish state continue the advance represented by the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in the last year of the Donald Trump administration by the governments of the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, Morocco, Bahrain and Kosovo.

These developments open the doors to working people in Israel and across the Middle East finding ways to join together to defend their class interests against assaults on their rights and living standards by all the capitalist governments in the region.

Improvements in the lives of working people in Israel — and the ability of workers there to unite and fight for a government of workers and farmers, whatever their nationality or religious views — will be settled in struggle, just as it will in other capitalist countries.

The existence — and the necessity — of the state of Israel as a refuge for Jews was settled by the gruesome history of capitalism and Jew-hatred in the 20th century. It became inevitable after the Nazis’ extermination of 6 million Jews during World War II. This was coupled with the refusal of the imperialist governments of the U.S., U.K. and other countries to open

## General strike led by truckers paralyzes Lebanon



AP Photo/Hussein Malla

A 12-hour general strike by truckers, public transportation workers and other unionists shut Lebanon down Jan. 13. Thousands of drivers and transport workers closed the country’s major highways, as well as roads inside cities and towns, where taxi and truck drivers used their vehicles to block traffic. In Beirut, the capital, many roads were blocked by giant sanitation trucks and other vehicles. Many workplaces, banks, schools and universities shut down.

Since government subsidies on fuel were ended in August, the price has soared by 450%, while workers’ wages stayed the same. Filling up your gas tank today costs more than the country’s monthly minimum wage. “I want any official,” said striker Mohamed al-Muqdad, “to try to live for one day with the salary of a poor worker.”

The crisis wracking Lebanon’s capitalist rulers is devastating working people, who have to spend hours daily struggling to find food and medicines they can afford. Over two-thirds of households can’t access clean water and the state electric utility provides barely two hours of power a day.

Lebanon’s currency has lost more than 90% of its value in less than two years, and, according to the World Bank, 80% of the country’s population lives in poverty.

The International Monetary Fund demands the country’s government end all subsidies on food, medicine and fuel as the price for new loans. And a large part of any “aid” would have to be directed towards servicing the country’s foreign debt rather than helping alleviate the crisis facing working people in Lebanon.

— VIVIAN SAHNER

their borders to Jews fleeing persecution — before, during and after the war. Another factor was the absence of a working-class leadership in Palestine that could unite Arab and Jewish workers in common struggle. Israel was established in 1948.

In 2020 Abbas eulogized victims of

the Holocaust, the first Arab member of the Knesset to do so. “I have empathy for the pain and suffering over the years of Holocaust survivors and the families of the murdered,” he told the Knesset. He called Holocaust denial a “betrayal of the values of truth and justice ... a fundamental principle in Islam.”

# Fires in Philadelphia, NY caused by landlord greed

## Continued from front page

steady profits from these government programs — as long as they don’t run up too many expenses maintaining their properties.

Almost all of those who died were from families of immigrants from Gambia, most of them Muslims, although the residents of the building include Black

as well as Latino families.

More than 1,000 people attended the Jan. 16 funeral for 15 of those killed, organized by Sheikh Musa Drammeh. “Let everybody see 15 caskets of their fellow Bronxites being buried because of the condition in which they lived,” he said at the Islamic Cultural Center, adding that if the building had adequate heat, there would never have been a fire in the first place.

## History of neglect

This is not the first fire in the building. In 1986 smoke filled the building from a blaze in the compactor room. Luckily, no one was injured then.

On Jan. 11 several tenants filed a class-action suit against the management. Jessika Valdez, who is part of the suit, told the *New York Post* that the door to her 18th floor apartment has “never closed on its own” during the 15 years she’s lived there.

A team of *Militant* correspondents spoke with residents in the area. They were told that lack of heat is common in the Bronx neighborhood, along with numerous other maintenance problems. One tenant invited them into her apartment to show them a badly leaking ceiling the landlords have failed to repair.

“Affordable” housing is big business. And Twins Parks has been a source of big profits for the city’s land-

lords and banks for years.

A joint venture of three firms that specialize in taking advantage of government “affordable” housing programs bought the Bronx tower and seven other properties in 2019. They benefited from \$36 million in loans from the New York State Housing Finance Agency. Federally financed Freddie Mac guaranteed the loans, lowering the interest rate. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Section 8 program pays the rent on 76 of the building’s 120 units, guaranteeing risk-free income.

Rick Gropper — a founder of Camber, one of the three firms — served as a “housing adviser” on newly elected Mayor Eric Adam’s transition team. Camber started out in 2016 with just one building. Now it owns 24 projects, many turning profits taking advantage of government programs.

Many real estate companies also take advantage of a special tax credit for “maintaining” units for low-income families. It’s not yet known if Camber and their landlord co-owners get those credits as well.

Not wanting to miss out on rent payments, the building owners are trying to get residents who were evacuated during the fire to come back to the 85 units still considered habitable, despite the smoke damage and remaining problems

Continued on page 9

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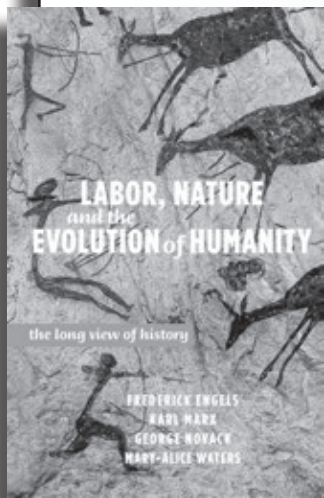
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# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## Steelworkers picket to prepare for Marathon contract talks

CARSON, Calif. — More than 100 members of United Steelworkers Local 675 picketed outside Marathon's Carson oil refinery here early in the morning Jan. 12, the day before national negotiations began between the union and Marathon Petroleum bosses. The current Marathon contract — which covers 30,000 oil workers — expires Feb. 1. At issue is a three-year contract covering wages, benefits and company-wide practices. Then each union local negotiates over local issues.

Workers carried signs saying, "Just practicing," and demanded "no job cuts, no pay cuts and no takeaways." Marathon is the largest U.S. refinery owner, operating 16% of national crude oil refining capacity. The contract will set the pattern for the oil industry.

— Bill Arth

## Teamsters defeat takeback push at Pennsylvania Coke plant

BETHLEHEM, Pa. — Striking Teamsters at the ABARTA Coca-Cola Beverages bottling and distribution plant here agreed to a new contract Jan. 14 after more than six weeks walking the picket line. Teamsters Local 773 members — 77 drivers, service and warehouse workers — struck the company's Bethlehem facility Dec. 6 when their previous contract expired.

The workers walked out because ABARTA management moved to replace the workers' union pension with a 401(k) retirement account and chip away at their health care benefits.

The new four-year contract maintains workers' pensions and preserves their health benefits, adding in an option for a lower-cost, less-extensive health care package. The workers won 60-cent-an-hour raises each year. The agreement was voted up by 81% of the union's members, Local President Dennis Hower reported. This ended the strike. The contract is retroactive back to Dec. 6.

One employee has been there for 50 years and is among those counting

on his pension when he retires, Hower said. "He deserves that pension."

— Osborne Hart

## San Diego sanitation workers win wage increase, end strike

Striking sanitation workers, members of Teamsters Local 542, voted 137-70 to accept an improved contract offer by Republic Services bosses, ending their four-week strike.

The strikers held firm, winning growing support from area workers and some in the city government, as stinking garbage piled up. They refused to accept the bosses' contemptuous wage offer, significantly less than what sanitation workers had won from the same company in Orange County. Picket lines didn't buckle when the company brought in a special group of strikebreakers the company calls the "Blue Crew."

Union workers told the media that the five-year contract includes a \$1.90 an hour wage increase the first year,



Militant/Fredy Huini

Carrying signs saying, "Just practicing," United Steelworkers Local 675 picket Jan. 12 in Carson, California, preparing for upcoming Marathon contract negotiations for 30,000 workers.

better than the company's original offer of \$1, along with \$.50 for the next three years and a \$1.50 raise the final year. They also won some improvements to their health care and a \$1,000 signing bonus.

"This contract isn't everything we believe we deserve," said union member Rafael Mejia, "but it's enough to go back to work and go back to taking care of our communities."

— Vivian Sahrner

# 8,400 King Soopers strikers fight over wages, two-tiers

## Continued from front page

month more union contracts will expire in Colorado Springs and at the Kroger-owned City Market chain in Western Colorado. Local 7 members have voted to strike there if no agreement is reached.

"I think it's corporate greed, I mean how much is enough? Kroger is getting more money than they ever had and cut labor down to nothing," striker David Lassio, who has worked at three different King Soopers in Boulder for 20 years, told the *Militant*. "They need to share with us and give us a livable wage. Everything is going up and we have stayed the same."

Parking lots are empty and regular customers are turning their cars around, honking their horns in support of the strikers. They went out on strike Jan. 12 for higher wages, safer working conditions, and to end the two-tier full- and part-time wage and benefit setup. This

is the first time since 1996 the grocery workers have been on strike.

"Sales are dramatically down, especially in-store traffic," Matthew Amereson, owner of Mayfair Liquors, which is located off the same parking lot as a King Soopers store in East Denver, told Denver7-TV. He said he's sympathetic to the strikers, even if their action is affecting his business. "It's an unfortunate situation if you work at a grocery store full-time and you can't pay your rent, and buy groceries, and make your car payment."

UFCW Local 7 held a strike rally of over 200 people in front of the Glendale neighborhood store Jan. 13. Strikers were joined by other unionists, including teachers and members of the Teamsters union, school board members, as well as some state and local elected officials. Teamsters Local 7 truck drivers are honoring the UFCW picket line, not making deliveries to any stores that are on strike.

The union and Kroger bosses resumed negotiations Jan. 14, but no progress has been made. "The offer King Soopers has on the table for workers today is even worse than it was in the days before the strike, ignoring virtually all of the proposals presented by workers," the union said in a press release after talks that day. The company offered "no new economic gains — and even omitting the \$4,000 sell-out bonuses which King Soopers had previously offered workers in order to get them to accept a concessionary contract."

King Soopers is advertising for replacement workers, offering \$18 per hour — in the range of the starting salary demanded by Local 7 and at least \$2 more than the wage the bosses offered in their latest proposal. This is just 13 cents above Denver's current minimum wage of \$15.87. And the company also demands workers give up daily overtime pay and proposes to combine job classifications that would cut some workers' wages by up to \$3.34 per hour. Many workers say they depend on food stamps and other federal assistance in order to make ends meet.

Many workers are part time, a setup that lets the company pay them lower wages and less benefits. Workers can wait years before being offered full-time positions.

"We just got through COVID and just this week lost one of our members," Janie Scarpello, a 42-year employee who works in an Arvada store, told the *Militant*. "We are 'essential' workers and the company is just being greedy."

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



### February 3, 1997

All those who support women's rights and democratic rights should be in the streets and in front of the clinics in response to the bombings of abortion facilities in Atlanta and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Protests and meetings are needed to speak out against the bombings, organize clinic defense, and demand the government find and prosecute those responsible.

As the capitalist economic system continues its downward spiral, the employing class must try to roll back, or at least slow down, some changes in consciousness about women's place in society. The goal of the bosses and their government is to undermine workers' political self-confidence and class consciousness in order to drive down the value of labor power, by increasing divisions in the working class.

Labor must include support for women's rights, and the fight for a woman's right to an abortion, in its demands.



### February 4, 1972

The following statement was issued by Linda Jenness, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, on Jan. 27:

President Nixon's televised speech Jan. 25 did not present a "peace plan" for Southeast Asia but a formula for continued war. Nixon says his proposal is an "honorable" way for the U.S. to end the war. I say there is only one honorable step the U.S. can take — the immediate and unilateral withdrawal by the U.S. in the affairs of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Nixon has appealed to the American people for unity behind his proposal for a "settlement" rather than a "surrender." At the same time, on the very day of his speech, the U.S. was raining bombs on North Vietnam and stepping up the air war in Laos.

President Nixon, the antiwar movement will answer you on April 22, the next date scheduled for major demonstrations against the war.



### February 1, 1947

BRUSSELS — The stubborn, four-week strike waged by the dockworkers of Antwerp against great odds, has ended in the greatest strike victory in this country since the "liberation." The strike began on Dec. 13, when 14,000 dockworkers walked off their jobs over low wages in the face of rising prices.

The government sent 2,000 troops to the docks to unload perishable goods. This was intended to intimidate the strikers as well as to check the paralyzing of the most important port on the continent. All financial support was denied to the strikers. Trade union funds were barred to them and the government refused them unemployment relief for taking part in an "unauthorized" strike.

But they did not reckon with the strikers' extraordinary determination. Without money, food, or coal in freezing weather, the strikers and their wives held fast. Not a single dockworker answered attempts to hire strikebreakers.

## Read about the battles that forged the US labor movement



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# Washington, Moscow spar

Continued from front page

ists in Ukraine but will not sanction Moscow yet. But they threaten to do so if there is Russian military action against Ukraine.

Over three decades the U.S. rulers have extended their vast armed might closer and closer to the borders of Russia, acting on the illusion they'd won the Cold War when the Stalinist regimes in the former Soviet Union crumbled. Washington brought former Soviet bloc countries into NATO and set up missile defense systems in Poland and Romania. NATO established rotating forces in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

Russian President Vladimir Putin says reclaiming Russia's "sphere of influence" is his central foreign policy goal. He laments the breakup of what he calls "historical Russia," as "the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century." During the talks Lavrov demanded that NATO pledge not to station its forces in Ukraine or other ex-Soviet nations.

After the talks, a Kremlin representative provocatively proposed Moscow counter NATO's expansion by deploying its own missiles on the territory of Latin American governments that have close relations with the Russian rulers.

The day after the talks began, some of the 100,000-plus Russian troops stationed along the border with Ukraine began conducting live-fire drills with tanks. Moscow has transferred trainloads of weaponry from its bases in the east to its western borders.

Putin insists the buildup is in response to threats by the Ukrainian army against Moscow-backed separatist forces in eastern Ukraine. His aim is to pressure the Ukrainian rulers to end moves toward closer relations with imperialist governments in Europe and the U.S.

In 2014, protests in Ukraine, involving more than a million workers, farmers and youth for months, overthrew the pro-Moscow regime of President Viktor Yanukovich. Thousands camped for weeks in the Maidan — Independence Square — in the capital, Kyiv, inspiring protests across the country and defiantly fighting off murderous attacks by riot police.

Moscow responded to the ousting of Yanukovich by arming pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine in a war

over the rich industrial Donbas region. It also seized and occupied Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula, dealing blows to the Crimean Tatar population and to Ukrainian sovereignty. Over eight years more than 14,000 Ukrainians have been killed in the periodic fighting, with millions displaced.

## Disarray in imperialist alliance

Despite being members of NATO, governments in the European Union took no part in the NATO-Moscow talks. This reflected the "hollowness of the European Union's actual weight in a world of hard power," Steven Erlanger wrote in the Jan. 10 *New York Times*.

Top EU bureaucrats complained at being left out of the talks. Earlier, the French and German governments had sent their own emissaries to Moscow for separate negotiations. The Ukrainian government was not invited to be part of any of these discussions.

There is a rift between the U.S. and German rulers, including over the German government's decision to import natural gas from Russia through Moscow's Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. It bypasses an earlier pipeline through Ukraine, another way for Moscow to squeeze Ukrainian sovereignty. It will increase the dependency of the German and other EU governments on gas supplies from Russian companies, which Moscow can use to exert political pressure on the German rulers.

This question has split the new Social Democrat-Greens governing coalition in Berlin. Washington wants Berlin to threaten to shelve the pipeline if Moscow's forces were to attack Ukraine. Germany's new foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock of the Green Party, agrees.

But the Social Democrats who head the governing coalition favor an arrangement with Moscow, saying Russian gas supplies are key for industrial production. With weaker armed forces of their own, Germany's capitalist rulers find themselves forced to tuck between Moscow and Washington to defend their interests.

President Joseph Biden is trying to pull the U.S. rulers' imperialist allies behind his threats of tougher economic action, hoping to deter Moscow. This is part of Washington's wider efforts to shore up alliances as it faces sharpening conflicts today with the rulers of

## DC protest hits Kazakhstan gov't attacks, Russian troops



Militant/Sarah Ullman

Over 150 people joined a Jan. 15 rally outside the White House organized by Free Kazakhs in solidarity with popular strikes and protests demanding political and social rights against the dictatorial government in Kazakhstan. The capitalist rulers there have ruled the vast mineral-wealthy country with an iron fist since independence was gained out of the disintegrating Soviet Union in 1991. U.S. oil bosses have huge investments there.

The regime used deadly repression, killing and injuring hundreds, and was backed by a military intervention by over 2,000 Russian-led troops that began Jan. 6. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev had appealed to Moscow for help in crushing the protests. As the protests have been throttled for now, these forces are withdrawing. But Moscow has reasserted its authority over the Central Asian republic, which Russian President Vladimir Putin regards as part of Russia's "sphere of influence."

— ROY LANDERSEN

China, especially, but also Russia, for markets, resources and investment.

Moscow's threats against Ukraine come alongside its recent intervention in Kazakhstan, helping repress massive anti-government protests, and its backing to the regime of

President Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus that in 2020 suppressed working people and youth fighting for political rights. The Russian rulers fear the example these struggles can have on millions devastated by the capitalist crisis in Russia.

# Warrior Met coal miners step up strike in Alabama, win support

Continued from front page

this strike through until we win. We know who the scabs are, we see them driving around town. We need to talk to them, to try to win them over, to explain what the strike is all about."

The union is planning a larger solidarity rally in February, in conjunction with the Alabama AFL-CIO, Blankenship said. Meanwhile, weekly rallies, which began shortly after the strike started last year, will continue at the Brookwood Ballpark.

The union was forced to stop picketing after the company got a restraining order against the union Oct. 27 by Tuscaloosa County Circuit Court Judge James Roberts. The order, which was extended several times, banned all picketing and any union activity at all within 300 yards of the mine entrances.

Other strikes, like those at Kellogg's in Omaha, Nebraska, and at John Deere were also hit with injunctions. The miners union had been staffing a dozen picket lines at the No. 4 and No. 7 mines, the preparation plant, the central shops, and at several railroad crossings since the strike began.

Warrior Met got the restraining order after hiring an anti-union publicity outfit, Los Angeles-based Strick and Company, to mount a violence-baiting campaign against the miners. Meanwhile, local and state police and courts have turned a blind eye to numerous incidents of company scabs using pickup trucks and other vehicles to strike and injure picket-

ing union members.

Striker Greg Pilkerton and his wife Amy told the *Nation* magazine they were both hit by scabs. Greg Pilkerton described how one scab, who the strikers had been arguing with, drove his truck right into the picket line. Pilkerton was hit by a flying burn

# Capitalist rulers face political crisis: Stakes for working people

Continued from front page

that crisis onto the backs of workers and farmers — unemployment, soaring prices, diminishing real wages, growing debts — all of which make it increasingly difficult for young workers to move from their parents' home, get a place of their own, and start families.

Democrats have no solution to the sharply counterposed political perspectives of the party majority and its growing socialist reform wing, with the threat of a split into two competing parties. Similar frictions exist between supporters of former President Donald Trump and determined "Never Trumpers" among the Republicans. Trump himself has denigrated party opponents like Florida Gov. Ronald DeSantis, mocking him for refusing to admit he got the coronavirus vaccine booster.

Neither of the two parties has a way to confidently defend Washington's domination of the imperialist world order in the face of conflicts with their imperialist rivals and with the regimes in Beijing and Moscow.

The World Bank issued a forecast of shrinking economic growth rates worldwide Jan. 11. Demands by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and imperialist rulers for debt repayment and austerity measures are aimed at making working people pay for the spreading crisis. They perpetuate the crushing conditions millions of the world's toilers already face in the semicolonial world. These conditions are exacerbated by the continued



Associated Press/Patrick Semansky

Oct. 9, 2016, Donald Trump-Hillary Clinton presidential debate. Plunging support for Joseph Biden has fueled speculation of second Clinton vs. Trump contest. In 2016 some 43% of eligible voters didn't vote at all, vastly outnumbering those who voted for any of the capitalist parties.

spread of coronavirus and deeply uneven access to vaccines.

Last month jobs growth in the U.S. was its slowest in a year, while official inflation — which ignores the most devastating price hikes hitting working people like food, gas and housing — hit 7%, a 40-year high. This comes on top of a decadeslong offensive by the employers that has weakened our unions, driven down wages and made work more unsafe. Far-ranging discussion about what we can do to defend our interests is taking place among workers today, alongside a number of strike battles. While there is no reason

to expect a labor upsurge in the coming months, this discussion will continue.

## Contempt for working people

The capitalist rulers and all their political backers look at the working class with deeply held contempt. Anyone who opposes or stands in the way of Democrats getting what they want on "voting reforms" is a modern-day George Wallace and wants to reimpose Jim Crow segregation, President Joseph Biden declared Jan. 11.

Because Republicans threaten "American democracy," wrote Jonathan Stevenson and Steven Simon in the Jan. 13 *New York Times*, "we need to think the unthinkable." Authorities — including U.S. "military institutions," they say — must start preparing for civil war that could break out by 2024.

At the same time, Trump continues to insist the 2020 vote was stolen from him and to urge state governments controlled by Republican majorities loyal to him to impose new restrictions to strengthen his hand in the future.

Biden demagogically claims Democrats' push for "voting rights" are critical to prevent "election subversion." But he doesn't have the votes in his divided party to get them passed. The cornerstone of his plan would be to replace U.S. constitutional guarantees of the states' control over voting measures with federal government control. Democrats hope to use the presidency to tilt the 2024 election in their favor. They motivate these measures by absurd claims that all the gains of the mighty Black-led working-class movement that overthrew Jim Crow are being overturned.

All of these far-reaching partisan moves by the bosses' parties have their biggest impact on working people and our political rights. Every time the politicians in Washington and their black-robed backers on the Supreme Court stake out new assaults on each other, they have the greatest effect on us. In every attack the rulers make, working people should look at ourselves as potential defendants in their criminal "justice" system.

## Constitutional republic

Norms that have guided the functioning of the United States capitalist government for over two centuries — the constitutional republic — are being targeted as both parties seek a road to

deal blows to the other and impose their control. When Biden and the Democrats failed to get sufficient votes to ram through their voting bills, they schemed for a way to abolish the Senate filibuster, which has been in place for almost 200 years. It currently requires a 60% majority to bring a bill to the floor.

Other "reforms" pushed by Democrats would transform the functioning of the U.S. government. These include changing the Senate as a chamber formed by two senators from each state — which defends representation from rural and farming areas from being disenfranchised by larger urban majorities — into one that mirrors the House of Representatives. These governmental institutions were the product of the capitalist class coming to power. But the Constitution and republican form of government they carved out contain space for the working class to organize and fight, and their destruction today by either ruling-class party for partisan interest would make it more difficult for us.

From relentless rounds of gerrymandering by both parties to the Democrats' proposed reforms today, the voting and election reforms pushed by both Democrats and Republicans are simply moves to strengthen their hand against their opponents. The one thing they both agree on is moves to make it more and more difficult for working-class parties like the Socialist Workers Party to get on the ballot and get a hearing. The Democratic Party-controlled government in Sen. Charles Schumer's New York has tripled the signatures required for "third parties" to get ballot status.

## Socialist Workers Party campaign

Support for the Biden presidency has been plunging, fueling media speculation that he will be replaced on the Democratic ticket in 2024. Conjecture that Hillary Clinton will seek the Democrat's nomination opens the prospects of a second Clinton vs. Trump election. "Never before have the presidential candidates of both major capitalist parties evoked such political distrust, disgust, and aversion among working people," Socialist Workers Party leader Steve Clark wrote about that 2016 election in *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record: Why Washington Fears Working People*.

One recognition of this fact was a column by Michelle Cottle in the Jan. 18 *New York Times*. She bemoans the undeniable fact that "the public" overwhelmingly believes the Democrats and Republicans are "all a bunch of corrupt, self-serving, money-grubbing, power-hungry crooks."

In the 2022 elections the Socialist Workers Party will field candidates across the country to present a course to unify and organize working people to fight for our own class interests against the bosses and their fractured parties. As they join union picket lines and reach out to fellow working people in cities and rural areas, SWP campaigners will explain why workers need to build our own party, a labor party, to lead the fight to replace the rule of the capitalist class with a workers and farmers government.

And they will champion all efforts by working people to defend our political rights and the political space we need to organize.

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# ‘Victory of Spanish Revolution would shake fascist regimes’

The Spanish Revolution (1931-39) by Leon Trotsky, a leader of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, is one of Pathfinder's books of the month for January. After the death of V.I. Lenin, the central leader of the Bolshevik Revolution, the revolutionary program developed by the Communist International under his guidance was reversed by the Stalinist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. Trotsky led the fight around the world to continue Lenin's proletarian internationalist course. The excerpt below is from his 1937 "Interview with Havas," a French news agency.

Less than a year before, Gen. Francisco Franco, a fascist, had launched a civil war against the republican government in Spain, which arose in 1931 out of revolutionary struggles by



Spanish workers' militia in 1930's. Workers and farmers struggle against fascist forces of Franco was sabotaged by Stalinist bloc with capitalist parties. "Audacious social reforms are strongest weapon in civil war," Trotsky said.

BY LEON TROTSKY

Only cowards, traitors, or agents of fascism can renounce aid to the Spanish republican armies. The elementary duty of every revolutionist is to struggle against the bands of Franco, Mussolini, and Hitler.

On the left wing of the Spanish governmental coalition, and partly in the opposition, is the POUM. This party is not "Trotskyite." I have criticized its policies on many occasions, despite my warm sympathy for the heroism with which the members of this party, above all the youth, struggle at the front. The POUM has committed the error of participating in the electoral combination of the "Popular" Front; under the cover of this combination, General Franco during the course of several months boldly prepared the insurrection which is now ravaging Spain. A revolutionary party did not have the right to take upon itself, either directly or indirectly, any responsibility for a policy of blindness and criminal tolerance. It was obliged to call the masses to vigilance. The leadership of the POUM committed the second error of entering the Catalan coalition government; in order to fight hand in hand with the other parties at the front, there is no need to take upon oneself any responsibility for the false governmental policies of these parties. Without weakening the military front for a moment, it is necessary to know how to rally the masses politically under the revolutionary banner.

In civil war, incomparably more than

in ordinary war, *politics dominates strategy*. [Confederate General] Robert Lee, as an army chieftain, was surely more talented than [Union General Ulysses] Grant, but the program of the liquidation of slavery assured victory to Grant. In our three years of civil war the superiority of military art and military technique was often enough on the side of the enemy, but at the very end it was the Bolshevik program that conquered. The worker knew very well what he was fighting for. The peasant hesitated for a long time, but comparing the two regimes by experience, he finally supported the Bolshevik side.

In Spain the Stalinists, who lead the chorus from on high, have advanced the formula to which Caballero, president of the cabinet, also adheres: *First military victory, and then social reform*. I consider this formula fatal for the Spanish revolution. Not seeing the radical differences between the two programs in reality, the toiling masses, above all the peasants, fall into indifference. In these conditions, fascism will inevitably win, because the purely military advantage is on its side. *Audacious social reforms represent the strongest weapon in the civil war and the fundamental condition for the victory over fascism*.

The policies of Stalin, who has always revealed himself as an opportunist in revolutionary situations, are dictated by a fear of frightening the French bourgeoisie, above all the "200 families" against whom the French Popular Front long ago declared war—on paper. Stalin's

policies in Spain repeat not so much Kerensky's policies in 1917 as they do the policies of Ebert-Scheidemann in the German revolution of 1918. Hitler's victory was the punishment for the policies of Ebert-Scheidemann. In Germany the punishment was delayed for fifteen years. *In Spain it can come in less than fifteen months*.

However, would not the social and political victory of the Spanish workers and peasants mean European war?

Such prophecies, dictated by reactionary cowardice, are radically false. If fascism wins in Spain, France will find itself caught in a vise from which it will not be able to withdraw. *Franco's dictatorship would mean the unavoidable acceleration of European war*, in the most difficult conditions for France. It is useless to add that a new European war would *bleed the French people* to the last drop and lead it into its decline, and by the same token would deal a terrible blow to all humanity.

On the other hand, the victory of the Spanish workers and peasants would undoubtedly shake the regimes of Mussolini and Hitler. Thanks to their hermetic, totalitarian character, the fascist regimes produce an impression of unshakable firmness. Actually, *at the first serious test they will be the victims of internal explosions. The victorious Russian revolution sapped the strength of the Hohenzollern regime. The victorious Spanish revolution will undermine the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini. For that reason alone the victory of the Spanish workers and peasants will reveal itself at once as a powerful force for peace*.

*The task of the true Spanish revolutionists consists in strengthening and reinforcing the military front, in demolishing the political tutelage of the Soviet bureaucracy, in giving a bold social program to the masses, in assuring thereby the victory of the revolution and, precisely in that way, upholding the cause of peace. Therein alone lies the salvation of Europe!*

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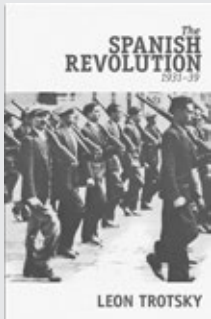
workers and peasants. Leaders of the Socialist and Communist parties formed a coalition with liberal capitalists, the Popular Front, backed by anarcho-sindicalists and centrists like the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM). This class-collaborationist government couldn't advance a class-struggle road forward, leading to defeat.

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# Fires caused by landlord greed

Continued from page 4  
with the building.

Tenant Walter Williams told the *New York Times* that a building representative called him saying, “We could get you back in a few days,” as soon as they repaint and put on a new door. “I stepped on a human dead person” on my way out, Williams said, incredulously, “and they want me to go back.”

Nearby community centers have received an outpouring of donations for the fire victims, so much that some are asking people to stop bringing things by.

“This tragedy shows why working people can’t rely on the capitalist government for anything,” Socialist Workers Party spokesperson Willie Cotton told the *Militant*. “Under the guise of providing affordable housing, the government enriches the landlords and other capitalists. The capitalist system counts success in the profits reaped by a handful, not on human life.

“That’s why we need to fight for a government-funded public works program, under the control of workers and our unions, to build, fix and maintain the affordable, truly comfortable housing working people need and deserve.

“In the course of fighting to take political power into our own hands and create a government of workers and farmers, working people will forge powerful unions and mass neighborhood organizations,” Cotton said. “We will ensure everyone has housing and every building is safe, enforced by committees of tenants backed by their own revolutionary government.”



## ‘Disaster waiting to happen’ in Philadelphia public housing fire

BY JANET POST

PHILADELPHIA — In the deadliest home fire in a generation in Pennsylvania, 12 people were killed Jan. 5 in a public housing row-house apartment in the Fairmount neighborhood here. Several others were hospitalized with serious injuries. This catastrophe was the product of the disdain for working people shown by city officials and the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

The three floors of the home had no working smoke detectors, and no fire escape, sprinkler system or fire extinguishers. Twenty-six people in multigenerational families resided there. Twenty-two were home when the fire broke out.

The 12, all who died of smoke inhalation, had been trapped on the upper two floors. A 5-year-old child on the second floor who survived told authorities that he accidentally ignited their Christmas tree while playing with a lighter, starting the fire.

The deceased include three sisters — Rosalee McDonald, 33; Virginia Thomas, 30; Quinsha White, 18 — and nine of their children, ages 2 to 16. A mass public funeral was held Jan. 17 at Temple University’s Liacouras Center.

The night after the fire 100 people joined together outside the Bache-Martin Elementary School where some of the children had attended, paying tribute and wondering how this tragedy could have ever happened.

### Disregard by housing authority

The row house has been owned since 1969 by the Philadelphia Housing Authority, Pennsylvania’s largest landlord. The PHA is funded by the federal government to provide housing for low-income residents. Kelvin Jeremiah, president and CEO of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, claimed modern smoke alarms with 10-year lithium-ion batteries had been installed in the building and inspected last year.

But Philadelphia Fire Commissioner Adam Thiel refuted that, saying all the alarms on the three floors were older models that used 9-volt batteries and none of them were working at the time of the fire. There was one new model in the basement, but it didn’t activate until it was too late.

Without a fire escape, and the stairs down to the first-floor doors blocked by fire and smoke, the residents suffocated to death. When asked at a press confer-

ence two days later why older housing authority buildings don’t have fire escapes, Jeremiah pointed to other homes in the middle-class Fairmount neighborhood and callously replied, “I’m not sure if I look around here I’ll be seeing [fire escapes] in any of these million-dollar homes.”

The city’s building code doesn’t mandate fire escapes in any city properties, or fire extinguishers, sprinklers, or tamper-proof smoke detectors in one- and two-unit structures. Philadelphia Housing Authority inspection records from last spring show still-pending maintenance requests for the now fire-gutted home, for broken light fixtures, an inoperable stove, deteriorating sheetrock walls and ceilings, and pest infestation.

One of the families’ grandmothers had signed her lease in 2011 for three daughters and one child. But as the family grew, they requested but were never offered a larger residence. The housing authority had “absolutely no indication” the family wanted to move, Jeremiah told the *Philadelphia Tribune* Jan. 8.

But Caleb Jones, a child therapist working with two of the children, denied that was true. “Rosalee [McDonald] believed it wasn’t safe,” Jones told the *New York Times* Jan. 8. He said that the “family had wanted to move to a larger home for years.” Jones said the “children were self-conscious about the house” and wouldn’t let friends come beyond the outside steps.

Fire victim Virginia Thomas had just recently messaged Facebook friends asking for a new place to stay. The night before the fire she contacted the grandmother of some of her children saying, “I’m trying to get out of here, to find a place for me and my kids.”

### Firehouse closed in budget cuts

Eighty thousand people live in Philadelphia Housing Authority homes, with another 40,000 families on the waiting list. An estimated 206,000 households are eligible. But that list was cut off in 2013, except in cases of elderly or disabled residents.



Reuters/Jeenah Moon

Funeral Jan. 16 at Islamic Cultural Center for victims of Bronx, New York, apartment building fire. Landlords put maximizing profits ahead of life and conditions of residents.

“Philadelphia is supplying less than 12% of the publicly supported housing needed for its low-income households,” wrote the *Times*.

The Fairmount building was one of 4,000 “scatter sites,” individual units the housing authority had bought up, the most owned in the country by any public housing agency. These on average are nearly a century old, with many in abominable condition.

On Jan. 10, in the aftermath of the fire, Michael Bresnan, president of International Association of Fire Fighters Local 22 here, asked President Joseph Biden if the federal government would fund the reopening of North Philadelphia’s Ladder 1, a mile from the site of the fire. That firehouse had been closed, along with others in the city, because of the city’s budget cuts in 2009. If it had been open, Ladder 1 would have cut the response time and helped get the blaze under control quicker. Biden has yet to respond to the request.

“As more and more facts about conditions in the apartment maintained by the Philadelphia Housing Authority come out, and their lies exposed, it’s clear this disaster was just waiting to happen,” Osborne Hart said, speaking for the Socialist Workers Party. “Like in the fire a few days later in the Bronx, this shows the capitalist rulers have no interest in providing safe and comfortable housing for working people. We need to use our unions to break from the bosses’ two parties and organize a broad social struggle to defend our livelihoods and living conditions.”

## EDITORIAL

# Fight to end Jim Crow changed US forever

President Joseph Biden’s claim that the Freedom to Vote Act and John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act are key to stop a new rise of Jim Crow segregation is a fraud. These bills are purely aimed at changing voting procedures to favor the Democrats.

Jim Crow was inflicted after the bloody defeat of Radical Reconstruction governments coming out of the Second American Revolution that overturned slavery. Its imposition was the worst setback in the entire history of the U.S. working class. The rural poor and working class were forcibly divided along color lines by bloody Klan violence. Class solidarity was crippled and racist oppression enshrined. It was enforced by state power, by both Democrats and Republicans, and by murderous violence from white-supremacist thugs.

Institutionalized segregation was only uprooted by the mass action of working people. “The mass, proletarian-led movement for Black rights,” Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes writes in *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, was “made possible by the political and physical discipline and courage of millions (including within the imperialist armed forces) and by the determination of a conscious vanguard to organize to defend their communities against night-riding terror, by any means necessary.”

This included the movement in response to the lynching of Emmett Till, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Freedom Rides, Woolworth lunch-counter sit-ins, the 1963 Battle of Birmingham, 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march, the organization of self-defense efforts in Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and more. These battles won support and awakened struggles for equal rights across the country. African

Americans who led these struggles saw them as a part of movements for national liberation sweeping Africa, Asia and elsewhere. In the words of Malcolm X, millions were awakening to their own self-worth.

The movement that tore down Jim Crow changed social relations in the U.S. forever, increasing prospects for forging solidarity among working people and in union struggles. It helped strengthen working-class consciousness.

No one is seriously moving to resurrect Jim Crow in the U.S. today. That would require the rulers to inflict a historic and bloody defeat on the working class. Racism, which is essential to capitalist rule and the comfortable lives of their middle-class backers, does and will continue to be fostered by those who exploit us. Their profits and power depend on promoting divisions among working people. Biden, like Democratic and Republican politicians of all stripes, defends the rule of the capitalist class.

Fighting to overturn capitalist state power is the only way to open the road to the final battles to end oppression and exploitation once and for all. To do that, workers and farmers need to break with the Democrats and Republicans and build our own party, a labor party, to lead millions in revolutionary struggle to establish our own government.

The example set and defended for decades by working people in Cuba, who overturned the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and made a socialist revolution, shows the road forward. And that revolution, like the mass proletarian movement that brought down Jim Crow here, are powerful examples of the capacities of working people to transform ourselves as we fight to change our conditions.

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